New York April 16th 1816.

Gentlemen & Brethren of the Society of Inquiry of the Princeton Theological Seminary:

We, the undersigned, have been appointed a committee by the Society of Inquiry of the New York Union Theological Seminary, to open a friendly correspondence with similar Societies in the various Theological Seminaries throughout our country; for the purpose of drawing our hearts together into more close communion & fellowship with each other, supplying mutual information, holding consultation upon the general interests of religion, & the best means of promoting the glorious & everlasting Kingdom of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ. It is evident that in carrying on such a correspondence a large field would be spread out before us, & a great variety of topics might be properly introduced, some as simple matters of fact, & others as subjects of discussion. Among these may be mentioned such things as statistick information in regard to particular Seminaries, the state of piety among the students, the interest which they manifest in the cause of Religion generally, the relative importance of the Foreign & Domestic field, the number of those who have actually devoted themselves to the work in either of these great departments, the general duty of spreading the Gospel throughout the world, & other things of a similar character.

Many reasons may be offered in favor of the establishment & permanent maintenance of such a correspondence.

1. It will evidently give the students of one seminary a better knowledge of those of another, than they can possibly obtain by any other means. For it is always taken for granted that any man or set of men know more about themselves than any body else, & are therefore better able to communicate information concerning themselves. And this knowledge is particularly desirable both because it is a pleasant thing in itself to be acquainted with the state of our brethren in other Theological institutions, & because we can thereby form a more correct opinion

of the importance, standing value of a particular institution, & the probable influence which its young men will exert upon the world.

2. It will tend to awaken a more universal & lively interest in the cause of Missions. It is impossible for any great & important subject to be kept continually before the mind, & viewed in all its aspects — its grandeur, glory, & excellence — without exciting great mental activity in regard to it. And of course the more it is contemplated, the greater will be the interest excited. Now without controversy the missionary work is preeminently of this character, surpassing all others in magnitude & importance. Too much thought & diligence, therefore, cannot easily be expended upon it.

3. The members of different Seminaries may thereby incite & encourage each other in the glorious enterprize, & by a mutual jealousy provoke to an increase of zeal & exertions & every kind of good works in regard to this particular thing. This latter point was an object aimed at by the Apostle Paul when he wrote to one church concerning the praiseworthy liberality of another. But emulation among young men in consecrating themselves & all their talents to the service of Christ, is so much more desirable & commendable as mind is superior in value & power to money. How infinitely more important that Theol. Seminaries seek to rival each other in regard to the number of devoted Missionaries which they send abroad, than in respect to the mere intellectual character & literary accomplishments of those whom they educate!

4. Such a correspondence will open room for concert of action between those students of different Seminaries, who have actually consecrated themselves to the Missionary work, & expect soon to go abroad. We cannot but feel that this is a very important point. They are soon to set out from home & kindred & country for different parts of the world, & will all stand related to what is left behind & what is before them in substantially the same way.

how indispensibly desirable, therefore, that they now begin to commune, become acquainted with each other, & mingle their sympathies together, in order that they may advise, encourage & support each other in view of the prospect that lies before them, & be more closely united in affection & interest when they severally reach their distant fields of labor.

We shall now take the liberty to state a few things in regard to our own Seminary. The Professors are four; — Dr. Robinson, of Biblical Literature; Dr. Hitchcock, of Systematic Theology; Mr. Turner, instructor in Hebrew to the Junior class, & Dr. Cox, Lecturer on Ecclesiastical History. The Library of the Seminary, called the Van Ess Library, because purchased of a priest of that name in Germany who was nominally a Catholic, but a very devoted & evangelical man, consists of about 16,000 volumes, mostly Latin works, comprising nearly all the Fathers, many works of the Middle Ages, & writings of the times of the Reformation, for two centuries afterwards. On the whole it is an exceedingly valuable Library, & perhaps the best of the kind in America. The Library of the Society of Inquiry is not large, containing not more than 1000 or 1500 volumes of a miscellaneous character.

The present number of students is 100, distributed as follows. In the Senior class 25 — Middle Class 45 — Junior Class 30, besides four resident licentiates. Of these 27 are from the New England States, 42 from the State & City of New York, & 29 from the States West & South of New York. The Seminary, which was opened in December 1836, has already graduated 152 alumni, of whom, sad to say, only four are on foreign missionary ground. Four are also deceased. The present prospect for missionaries, however, is somewhat better. In the Senior class there is one who expects to go to the Sandwich Islands. Also one who within the last few weeks has resolved to go to India. In the Middle class there are 6, & in the Junior Class 5. This makes 13 in all, but we may still reclaim, what

are there among so many? The Great Rest engages a considerable share of attention among our students, & some have resolved to go there. Three of the present Senior Class are from the South, who will return thither. The meetings of the Society of Inquiry, held the first Monday of every month, are well attended, & usually rendered very interesting.

The state of piety among the students, though it be not a matter of boasting, may be considered on the whole as very good. Many of them have recently been stirred up to a greater sense of duty than before, & have resolved to consecrate themselves as individuals more entirely to the service of God. One or two cases of this character are peculiarly remarkable, as displaying the wonderful grace & mighty power of God in his operations upon the heart, enabling the individual to exercise a stronger faith & enjoy more intimate communion with his Savior, & submit with more willingness & childlike simplicity to his will. It is these reviving influences of God's Spirit in the hearts of theological students, as well as ministers & Christians generally, that are now particularly needed, in order to give Christianity an impulse & irresistible momentum which shall carry all before it, & speedily secure the world's conversion. May God in his infinite mercy grant the blessing!

In conclusion we would say, brethren, that it is our earnest desire to cultivate feelings of Christian friendship & brotherly love towards you, & to have them reciprocated on your part. We speak our hearts freely, & beg that you will do the same. We are all one in Christ Jesus, & members one of another. If we are the subjects of his Kingdom, & the Spirit of holiness dwelling in us, we are all enclosed by the same moral boundaries, & must necessarily sympathize with each other. Our interests, our desires, our hopes & aims are truly essentially the same, & cannot be otherwise. The only object for which we were created & are upheld, & for which this wicked world is kept in being, is for the sake of the Church of Jesus Christ, — that holy nation, that royal priesthood, & peculiar people purchased by his own precious blood. When on earth, speaking of his then infant flock, he declared that

other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring & they shall hear my voice; & there shall be one fold, & one shepherd." It is our duty therefore, in common with all the ministers & people of God every where, to go into all the world & preach the Gospel to every creature, that all alike may have opportunity to partake of the blessings of redemption, & if the Lord will, become heirs of eternal life. May we all prove ourselves zealous & faithful in the prosecution of this glorious work, & be at last approved & accepted by our great Master with the joyful welcome, "well done, good & faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

William L. Richards,
Secretary of Foreign Correspondence,
Joseph H. Martin,
Secretary of Domestic Correspondence,
of the Soc. of Inq. of N. Y. U. C. Semy.

Ans 9th Oct 1846

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To The Society of Inquiry
of Princeton Theological Seminary,
Princeton,
N. J.